

## **Child and Youth Safety and Protection Guidelines**

First Baptist Church  
40 High Street  
Holliston, MA 01746  
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To help protect children, First Baptist Church of Holliston has adopted the following Child and Youth Safety and Protection Guidelines. It is important that all First Baptist Church of Holliston paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent abuse against children. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of the guidelines, and an acknowledgment to be signed by those people working with children.

### **Purpose**

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child abuse in order to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
- Assist First Baptist Church of Holliston in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
- Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
- Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual or physical abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
- Reduce the possibility of false accusations of abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

### **Definitions**

The following terms used herein are defined as follows:

1. Paid Staff: any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid.
2. Children/Youth/Minor: any person who has not reached his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. Adult: Any person who has reached his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or age of majority as defined by state law.
4. Volunteer: Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults, and has been an active participant of First Baptist Church of Holliston for six months.

## **General Safety Guidelines**

- All Staff, paid and volunteer, involved in any way with children and/or youth will be required to complete the screening process.
- Reasonable effort will be made to have two responsible workers in the toddler/nursery room during worship service.
- Parents/Guardians are welcome to check on their children and/or youth at any time.
- Every effort will be made to provide a safe environment for all children and youth. Serious accidents will be immediately reported to the parent/guardian. Minor accidents will be reported to the parents when the child or youth is picked up. A staff member in the room at the time of the accident will complete a written report to be turned in to the Pastor.
- No child, youth or staff with any symptom of an infectious illness may attend any class.
- Strict hand washing must be practiced by children, youth and staff before eating or handling food, after going to the bathroom or assisting in toileting or diapering, and after contact with body fluids (mucus, blood, vomit, etc.)

## **Child Safety Guidelines ages infant to 6<sup>th</sup> grade**

- Reasonable effort will be made to staff classes with: at least one worker for every three babies and/or toddlers; at least one worker for every 5 children from ages 3 to 5; at least one worker for every 8 children in grades K-6.
- When taking children to the restroom, workers should stay at the restroom door until the child is finished. Workers may enter to assist only when absolutely necessary.
- Children in grades 2 – 6 should be sent to the restroom in same sex pairs, and should enter bathroom through the Toddler room, not from the hallway.
- Changing diapers is to be done in a room with at least one other worker present. No child shall be left unattended on a changing table at any time.
- Children in all classes will be checked in and out by a parent or other responsible adult.

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## **Youth Safety Guidelines** **7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>**

- ◆ Leaders are to monitor (and never practice) playful, physical activity between students and end it if:
  - There is the potential for physical harm
  - Someone is not having fun
  - Someone is being bullied, disrespected or degraded in any way
  - The nature of the activity is sexual in any way
  
- ◆ Show of affection between leaders and students should be managed appropriately by the adult. The following are acceptable ways to show physical affection between a leader and a student:
  - side by side hugs
  - touch on shoulders or upper arms
  - Non lingering frontal hugs
  
- ◆ When talking or meeting with a student on an individual basis, leaders must make a reasonable effort to not be isolated with the students.

### **Overnight or Retreat/Mission Trips (9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> )**

- ◆ Leaders will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and should provide some information regarding the trip.
- ◆ Leaders and students are to be fully clothed at all times in sleeping areas whether they are cabins, dorms, hotel rooms or tents.
- ◆ Leaders and students of the opposite sex will not be housed together whether they are in cabins, dorms, hotel rooms or tents.
- ◆ Reasonable effort will be made by leaders and students to change clothes out of sight of others (such as in a private bathroom)
- ◆ Leaders and students are to wear pajamas or appropriate clothing when sleeping.
- ◆ Leaders are to refrain from lying on a student's bed at any time.
- ◆ Leaders and students are not to share a bed under any circumstances.
- ◆ Students will not sleep more than one per bed for twin beds and two per bed for double beds and larger.
- ◆ When only group showers are available, leaders and students must shower at different times. When individual shower stalls are available, leaders will make a reasonable effort to shower at a different time from the students.

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- ◆ Leaders and students are to be fully clothed while walking to and from the shower area. Towels around the waist or torso are not acceptable.
- ◆ There is to be no non-emergency physical contact between two people in the shower area.
- ◆ When transporting students, leaders are not to ride alone with a minor.
- ◆ First Baptist Church will screen all paid staff and volunteers and approve those individuals in advance for any overnight activities.

### **The Protection of Children**

Every person ministering to children (under the age of 18) in any church program has a moral and spiritual responsibility to protect those children. This responsibility is shared by both volunteer and paid staff members of the church. The church should be a place of safety for all children and an answer to prayer for those needing relief from an abusive situation.

### **Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect**

Massachusetts law requires an individual who is a mandated reporter to immediately report any allegations of serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families by oral communication. A written report must then be completed within 48 hours. All church volunteers and employees working with children clearly fall within the guidelines defining mandated reporters. Physicians, nurses, teachers, day care workers and foster parents are also mandated reporters. When suspected abuse is reported to the person in charge of an institution or school, then the person in charge, and not the staff member, is required to make the report. All reporters are immune from liability and in almost all cases, the reporter's name is not revealed to the family.

Sometimes people are unsure if a situation is abusive. If in doubt, volunteers/paid staff should either call the Department of Children and Families directly or immediately share their concerns with the Pastor. The DCF Child-at-Risk 24 hour hotline may be reached at 1-800-792-5200.

## **Definition of Abuse and Neglect**

According to Massachusetts law and Department of Children and Families regulations (110 CMR, section 400):

### **Abuse** includes:

- The non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under age 18 which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury; or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth; or any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child under the care of that individual.

### **Neglect**

- Failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care.

### **Physical Injury**

- Death; or fracture of a bone, subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, and any other such nontrivial injury; or soft tissue swelling or skin bruising, depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred and the number and location of bruises; or addiction to a drug or drugs at birth; or failure to thrive.

## **Signs of Abuse**

Church workers should be alert to the physical signs of abuse, neglect and molestation as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a child may exhibit. Some of the more common signs are summarized below (adapted from Sloan, 1983):

### **Physical signs may include:**

- Lacerations and bruises – particularly bruises of different colors suggesting repeated beatings.
- Difficulty walking
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Evident malnutrition
- Unattended physical or medical problems
- Inadequate clothing

- Distinctively shaped injuries suggesting an object ( such as a belt buckle or rope) or human bite marks
- Pressure bruises around the neck, ankles or wrists

**Behavioral signs may include:**

- Anxious, nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Excessive fear of being approached or touched
- Sexual self-consciousness
- Sexual behaviors or references that are bizarre, unusual or too sophisticated for the child's age
- Behavior that is withdrawn, fearful, infantile or filled with fantasy
- Fear of going home

**Verbal signs may include the following statements:**

- “\_\_\_\_\_ does things to me when we're alone.”
- “I don't like to be alone with \_\_\_\_\_”
- “\_\_\_\_\_ fooled around with me.”
- “I'm afraid of \_\_\_\_\_.”

Any person working with minors on behalf of FBCH who suspects any signs of abuse or neglect must immediately report this to the Pastor. All information will be reviewed by the Pastor and Elders, and appropriate actions will be taken. In the case a child appears to be in immediate danger the Pastor and Elders will file an immediate report. Under no circumstances shall the decision making process concerning whether to file a report or not be allowed to extend beyond 24 hours.

### **Response to Abuse**

First Baptist Church of Holliston will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of abuse. All accusations of abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege abuse and those who have been accused of abuse.

When an allegation is made involving abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The Pastor and Elders will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the Pastor or an Elder is the individual accused of abuse, then he will be removed from the investigating team. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws.
2. Report the matter to First Baptist Church of Holliston's insurance carrier.

3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. First Baptist Church of Holliston may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
  5. An official of First Baptist Church of Holliston (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the governing body of First Baptist Church of Holliston and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
  6. An official of First Baptist Church of Holliston will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
  7. An official of First Baptist Church of Holliston will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians in case of a minor, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
  8. During the investigation, an official of First Baptist Church of Holliston shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or guardians in case of a minor, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
  9. An official of First Baptist Church of Holliston (and legal counsel or other consultants) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
  10. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of first Baptist Church of Holliston.
  11. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.

**It is essential that anyone that falls within this reporting chain keep all information in the strictest of confidence. If approached by individuals or the media, direct them to the Pastor and Elders.**

Note: If they prefer, volunteers may report suspected abuse or neglect directly to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families at 1-800-792-5200.

## **Disqualification**

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any violent or sexual offense against minors or adults as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.



## **Child and Youth Safety Guidelines Acknowledgement**

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. First Baptist Church of Holliston reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the First Baptist Church of Holliston or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I received a copy of the First Baptist Church of Holliston's Child and Youth Safety Guidelines. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of the First Baptist Church of Holliston.

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date